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Drinking Water Safety Not Affected by H1N1 Flu -- Milwaukee Water is Safe to Drink

The City of Milwaukee says the Swine-origin Influenza A (H1N1) virus (S-OIV), also referred to as H1N1 Flu or Swine Flu, is not transmitted in treated drinking water, and Milwaukee water continues to be safe. With the alert about the possibility of flu pandemic, the Milwaukee Water Works is offering information about the safety of drinking water.

The national Water Information Sharing and Analysis Center (WaterISAC) notes the disease, H1N1 Flu, must be transmitted through person-to-person contact or contact with a contaminated surface. Water that has been treated through conventional disinfection processes does not pose a risk, even if the source water has previously come into contact with infected people or animals. This means that utilities practicing disinfection, like the Milwaukee Water Works, can assure customers the treated water coming from the taps in homes and businesses is safe to drink.

Influenza viruses, including H1N1 flu, are effectively removed from water by filtration and disinfection, WaterISAC said. "Because Influenza viruses, including swine influenza A (H1N1), are more susceptible to disinfection than most enteric viruses (like Poliovirus, Hepatitis A, or Norovirus), and the influenza viruses are slightly larger and more effectively removed by filtration, current drinking water treatment barriers provide a high degree of protection," said Dr. Mark LeChevallier, director of Innovation & Environmental Stewardship for American Water. (Source: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/147937.php>) The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have concluded that free chlorine levels typically used in drinking water treatment are effective at deactivating the virus at temperatures as low as 5° Centigrade.

Milwaukee's drinking water quality meets all state and federal health standards. The Milwaukee Water Works treats Lake Michigan water with a multiple-step process that removes illness-causing microorganisms and contaminants. The water is disinfected with ozone, a highly reactive gas that destroys microorganisms, removes taste and odor, and reduces byproducts from chlorine disinfection. Coagulation, settling, and biologically active filtration remove additional particles. Fluoride is added for dental health. Final chloramine disinfection ensures safe drinking water throughout the distribution system and at consumer faucets.

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) has developed [information for consumers at www.Drinktap.org](http://www.Drinktap.org), with links to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The City of Milwaukee Health Department offers information at www.ci.mil.wi.us/

The Milwaukee Water Works is recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a leader in providing high quality drinking water and monitoring water quality. The city-owned utility serves the City of Milwaukee, Brown Deer, Butler, Franklin, Greendale, Greenfield, Hales Corners, Menomonee Falls, Mequon, New Berlin, Shorewood, St. Francis, Thiensville, Wauwatosa, West Allis, and West Milwaukee.

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Safe, Abundant Drinking Water.